

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We ask that you prioritize Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor development in your funding strategy and interim guidance for the \$8 billion appropriated for passenger rail in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 ("ARRA"). We strongly believe that an expansive intercity passenger rail network is the necessary foundation to support a comprehensive national passenger rail system with successful high speed rail corridors.

Congress and President Obama supported the investment in passenger rail infrastructure because of its ability to stimulate economic growth and job creation across the country. For every \$1 billion invested in passenger rail infrastructure, an estimated 20,000 green jobs are created. The \$8 billion allocated for passenger rail in ARRA has the ability to transform our nation's transportation system. Americans' demand for safe, affordable, and reliable passenger rail service is at an all time high. Nearly 29 million passengers used Amtrak in 2008, marking the sixth year of increased ridership. Much of this success is occurring in states like Illinois where citizens are increasing their state passenger rail investment. After increasing service in 2007, Illinois' three downstate intercity routes experienced some of the highest percentage ridership and revenue increases in the country.

One of the most promising additions to the Midwest's Chicago Hub Network is the Chicago-Dubuque Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor via Rockford, Freeport, Lena, and Galena. According to a 2008 Amtrak feasibility study, the Chicago-Dubuque route requires \$32.3 million to improve track conditions for 50 mph service. At this speed annual ridership is expected to be 77,500 passengers. We frequently hear from constituents who look forward to the benefits of passenger rail for business, tourism, and commuter travel as well as the associated impact on regional commerce and quality of life.

We are pleased by your leadership at the U.S Department of Transportation and we look forward to working together with you to stimulate the economy and transform our nation's transportation infrastructure. We appreciate the early indications that you plan to strike a balance between funding intercity rail corridors and high speed rail corridors. ARRA funding for intercity passenger rail projects will be critical to the future Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor development, including the Chicago-Dubuque corridor, and we urge you to consider this project when making allocations to shovel-ready projects that will create jobs, modernize our transportation infrastructure and strengthen our economy.

Sincerely,

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Bruce Braley  
Member of Congress

  
Don Manzullo  
Member of Congress